

Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /087 W

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R 211720Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4985

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0146

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR MOPS MR SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: HOAGLAND ON WESTERN SAHARA

1. PAIR OF ARTICLES ON WESTERN SAHARA FILED FROM DAKHLA JANUARY 15 AND 18 BY WASHINGTON POST'S JIM HOAGLAND (WHICH HAVE JUST ARRIVED HERE IN INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNES OF JANUARY 16 AND 19) ARE MUST READING FOR ALL SAHARA WATCHERS. HOAGLAND HAS PRECISELY IDENTIFIED THE SERIES OF INTERCONNECTED PROBLEMS AND PERCEIVED WITH STARTLING CLARITY FOR ONE WHO HAS ONLY RECENTLY JOINED RANKS OF SAHARA WATCHERS THE COMPLEX INTERPLAY AMONG AND CLASH BETWEEN GROUP ATTITUDES. FROM OPTLC OF CAPITAL OF THE WEAKEST OF SAHARA PLAYERS, HOAGLAND PIECES HIT ALMOST IN EXACT CENTER OF

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BULLSEYE.

2. DESCRIPTIONS OF MAURITANIAN/MOROCCAN TAKEOVER OF DAKHLA AND REACTION OF SAHARANS (JANUARY 15 STORY) IS ESPECIALLY GOOD. WHILE WE CANNOT VERIFY OR CONFIRM PARTICULAR BITS OF INFORMATION IN THIS PIECE FROM 600 KILOMETERS AWAY, WE DO WISH TO REPORT THAT OVERALL IMPRESSION COINCIDES EXACTLY WITH WHAT WE CAN SEE FROM NOUAKCHOTT. MOREOVER, SCARCE SCRAPS OF HARD INFORMATION WE HAVE PICKED UP HERE ABOUT RECENT SAHARA EVENTS CONFIRM A FEW OF THE SPECIFICS HOAGLAND HAS RECORDED. FOR EXAMPLE, EUROPEAN TV TEAM WHICH HAPPENED TO BE IN DAKHLA DAY MAURITANIAN TROOPS ARRIVED AND FEW DAYS OR TWO LATER ALSO REPORTED DISENCHANTMENT OF DAKHLAWIS WITH "MAURITANIAN OCCUPIERS". INDEED TV CREW ADDED ASSERTION THAT DELEGATION OF DAKHLA WORTHIES AND NOTABLES MET ARRIVING MAURITANIAN CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATORS AT AIRPORT WITH EARNEST REQUEST THEY PACK UP AND GO BACK TO NOUAKCHOTT.

3. OF PERHAPS GREATER INTEREST AND SIGNIFICANCE, HOWEVER, ARE SERIES OF ON-SPOT PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS/ASSESSMENTS AND NUMBER OF VIGNETTES IN HOAGLAND PIECES WHICH ILLUSTRATE AND FIRMLY SUPPORT ANALYSES AND ATTITUDES WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE MAURITANIANS HAVE ADVANCED OR MANIFESTED. ITEM: HOAGLAND'S QUOTATION "WHEN SPANISH WERE HERE WE WERE SPANISH; NOW MOROCCANS ARE HERE WE ARE MOROCCANS" CONFIRMS AND HIGHLIGHTS ACCURACY OF SIDI 'ABDALLAH'S ASSESSMENT OF SAHARANS AS "POLITICALLY VOLATILE PEOPLE WHO CAN SWITCH SIDES FROM ONE DAY TO NEXT". WE SUSPECT THAT IF HOAGLAND HAD WAITED AROUND ANOTHER DAY OR TWO, HIS INTERLOCUTOR WOULD HAVE COMPLETED QUOTATION WITH "AND NOW THAT IT'S OBVIOUS MAURITANIANS ARE GOING TO GET DAKHAL, WE ARE MAURITANIANS". ITEM: FRICTION BETWEEN MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS, ESPECIALLY ON PART OF MILITARY WHO AS A PROFESSIONAL GROUP ARE LESS PRACTICED THAN DIPLOMATS AND CIVILIAN BUREAUCRATS IN COVERING OVER ANTI-PATHIES, PERMEATES BOTH PIECES AND IS HIGHLIGHTED BY DIRECT QUOTATIONS. ITEM: CONDESCENDING SUPERIORITY WHICH CHARACTERIZES MOROCCAN ATTITUDE TOWARD AND INTERACTION WITH MAURITANIANS REAPPEARS THROUGHOUT ARTICLES, BUT NOWHERE MORE SO THAN IN QUOTES

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ATTRIBUTED TO BENHIMA AND ANOTHER "MOROCCAN OFFICIAL" ABOUT MAURITANIAN ARMY IN JANUARY 18 PIECE.

4. WE WOULD HAVE SCORED HOAGLAND A DIRECT HIT ON ABSOLUTE CENTER OF TARGET EXCEPT FOR ONE REPORTED "FACT" AND ONE CUMULATIVE IMPLICATION. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY HARD INFORMATION WHICH WOULD SUPPORT THE QUOTED DAKHLAN ASSERTION THAT MAURITANIAN SOLDIERS LOOTED AND BRUTALIZED THEIR WAY

TO DAKHLA. JANUARY 15 STORY LEAVES IMPRESSION (WHICH
HOAGLAND MAY INDEED NOT HAVE INTENDED) THAT DAKHLAWIS
MUCH PREFER MOROCCANS TO MAURITANIANS, AND WOULD NOT
RPT NOT HAVE OBJECTED WHATSOEVER, OR AT LEAST VERY
LITTLE, TO A MOROCCAN TAKEOVER. WE ARE VIGOROUSLY
SKEPTICAL. NOT BECAUSE WE THINK OUR HOSTS/CLIENTS ARE
POLITICAL PARAGONS WITHOUT BLEMISH IN MOTIVE OR PERFORM-
ANCE OR WITH A MONOPOLY ON WISDOM AND VIRTUE. BUT
BECAUSE WE ARE CONVINCED THAT A LARGE AND INCREASING
NUMBER OF SAHARANS DOES NOT WISH TO BE EITHER MOROCCAN
OR MAURITANIAN AND LONGS TO BE INDEPENDENT MASTERS OF
THEIR OWN FATE.HANDYSIDE

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